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DIVISION OF HOUSING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**



700 Adams Avenue
Memphis, Tennessee 38105
901.544.1100

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**PRESS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT: Sandra Mays, Director of Communications/Marketing/Public Relations, MHA/HCD
(901) 544-1360 (w) (901) 331-5999 (cell)

**The City of Memphis
Celebrate New Alliances in the College Park Area
With the Opening of the Citizens Center and Renovation of the
FireHouse Community Arts Center**

MEMPHIS, TN October 27, 2004.....Reginald Milton, executive director of the South Memphis Alliance and Bennie West, executive director of the FireHouse Community Arts Center earlier today held a dual press conference in celebration of the South Memphis Alliance new Center and renovations at the Firehouse Community Arts Center. The South Memphis Alliance and the Firehouse Community Arts Center were awarded grants as part of a strategic plan to improve targeted neighborhood from the City of Memphis.

The City of Memphis is continuing its efforts to rebuild and renovate targeted neighborhoods," stated Robert Lipscomb, executive director/director MHA/HCD, "The \$150,000 investment into the South Memphis Alliance Citizen Center will promote community involvement and the \$150,000 remodeling of the Firehouse will now allow expansion of it's programming to our youth within a structurally sound facility."

The South Memphis Alliance Citizens' Center will be the headquarters to neighborhood association, block clubs and civic clubs in and around the South Memphis area. The Center will promote greater civic engagement among residents and will also serve as a think-tank for civic engagement and improved democracy.

"This center will breathe new life into this community and will help residents as they struggle with how to become more involved," stated Reginald Milton, SMA executive director as he thanked the City, the SMA board and community groups for their support.

"For the first time in a long time I can truly see a positive change. SMA is helping to reshape our neighborhoods," noted Gladys McGowan, SMA Board Chair and President of Census Tract 61 Neighborhood Watch Association.

The South Memphis Citizens' Center is distinguished by the fact it is the first Citizens' Center in the City of Memphis owned and operated by local neighborhood groups. "What makes me so proud about this Center is it is ours," stated Sylvester Hudson, President of Mallory Heights.

The Memphis Black Arts Alliance, Inc., is the only organization of its kind in the Greater Memphis area and fills a void in the cultural like of the community. It fulfills its mission

through family-oriented, intergenerational experiences to celebrate and nurture the arts, creativity and the cultural contributions of African Americans. The curriculum includes more than 40 quality arts-related opportunities and experiences to more than 200 students on a weekly basis.

The FireHouse Community Arts Center and Academy headquartered in the former City of Memphis 1912 Fire Station was in need of infrastructure repairs and renovations to its structure. As part of the revitalization effort in the greater College Park area, a grant was given to the FireHouse Community Arts Center so that it could continue to offer cultural and art experiences for the families in the community.

“The funds were used to buy a new roof, central heating and air, upgrade electrical, landscaping, furnishings, fixtures and equipment,” stated Bennie West, executive director of The Firehouse Community Arts Center. “We are very grateful to the City for its wise investment in our center and into the continuation of a cultural and artistic experience for our community.”

The press conference concluded with a tour of the Firehouse and reception.

More information may be obtained for the South Memphis Alliance Citizens Center by calling 626-0623 or for the FireHouse Community Arts Center by calling 948.9522.

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October 27, 2004
